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ABSTRACT

This booklet includes presentations, discussions, and photographs of a meeting in December 1997 of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) and the Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC) at the former Alex Haley farm. The meeting involved intergenerational conversations about the effects of race, poverty, and family and community disintegration on children, and how advocates can connect and expand action for children into a larger unified vision and action plan. Contents of the booklet are grouped into the following categories: (1) "Coming Back To Get You"; (2) "The Alchemy of Activism"; (3) "Taking up the Call"; (4) "Passing on the Spark"; and (5) "Meditations for Children's Movement Builders." Included are "A Black Community Manifesto and Crusade for Children" and lists of participants and CDF/BCCC state and local organizations present. (EV)

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Rekindling the Spirit

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A Vision for the New Millennial Movement to Leave No Child Behind

Elizabeth S Reynolds

Elizabeth S. Reynolds

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CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

BLACK COMMUNITY CRUSADE FOR CHILDREN

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About CDF and BCCC

The Children's Defense Fund's (CDF) mission is to *Leave No Child Behind* and to ensure every child a *Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective voice for *all* of the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investment in children before they get sick or into trouble, drop out of school, or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundations, corporate grants, and individual donations. We have never taken government funds.

The Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC) is the outgrowth of a December 1990 meeting of Black leaders co-convened by Dr. John Hope Franklin, Dr. Dorothy Height, and the Children's Defense Fund. BCCC, coordinated by CDF, works in collaboration with effective local and regional child-serving organizations and a Working Committee of prominent Black leaders. BCCC seeks to:

1. Communicate the crisis facing Black children and all children and the steps that must be taken to produce positive outcomes.

2. Build effective, informed African American leadership focused on the needs of children. Developing a successor generation of young leaders is a major BCCC priority.

3. Inspire, encourage, and support high-quality, effective personal and organizational actions, programs, and initiatives aimed at improving the life circumstances and chances of Black children and all children.

4. Promote sound, effective initiatives and policies at the local, state, and national levels that ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start and that support efforts aimed at revitalizing communities and ensuring positive youth development.

5. Reconnect the Black middle class and Black poor and rebuild the extended Black community family that historically has provided a web of support and a lifeline of hope for Black children.

The BCCC Manifesto, drafted by Dr. John Hope Franklin and the BCCC Working Committee is in the Postscript, and a list of participants and a description of CDF's and BCCC's state and local presence are in the Appendix.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to all the participants at the December Haley Farm meeting who are working to Leave No Child Behind. Special thanks to Roland L. Freeman, whose photographs vividly captured the spirit of the meeting. Special thanks, too, to CDF staff Desda Moss, Diane Minor, Jennifer Leonard, Anourack Chinyavong, and Elizabeth Reynolds.

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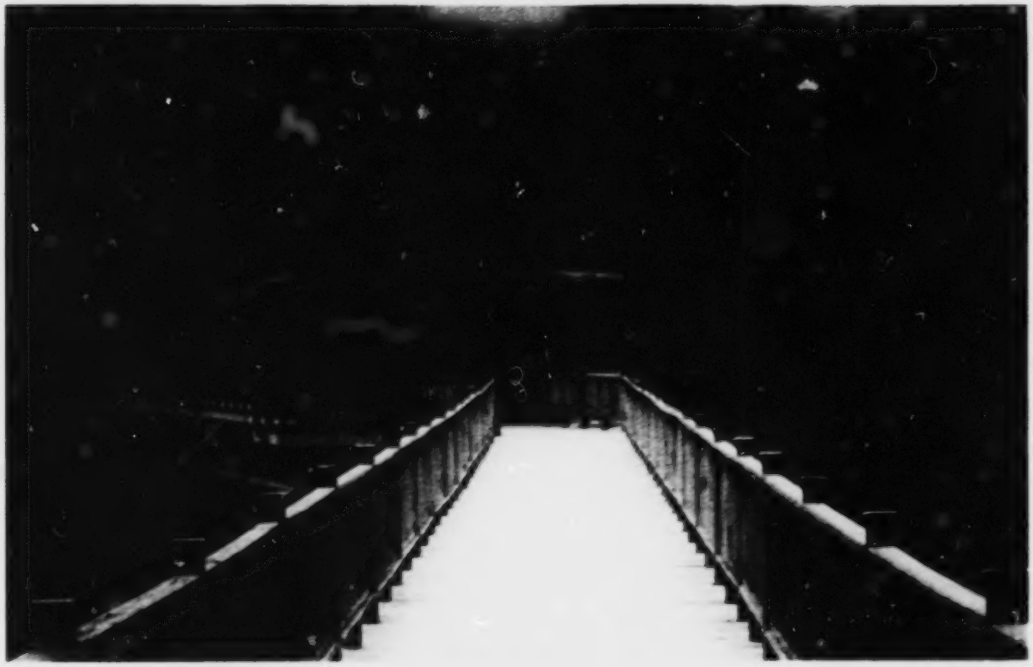
Rekindling the Spirit

A Vision for the New Millennial Movement to Leave No Child Behind

With Photographs by Roland L. Freeman

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND
BLACK COMMUNITY CRUSADE FOR CHILDREN

The Gazebo at Haley



CDF Staff Photo

How important it is to have a place for training, a place for rejuvenation, and a place you can go home to in a movement.

—*Angela Glover Blackwell*

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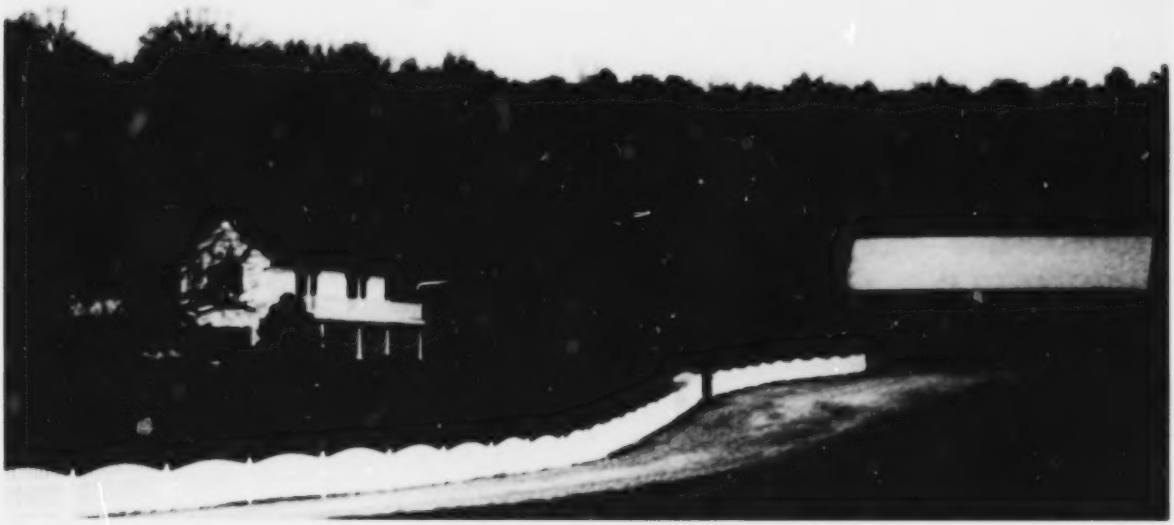


CDF Staff Photo

COMING TO THIS PLACE IS A SPECIAL KIND OF UTOPIAN MOMENT, FOR WHEN WE HEAR OF ALL THE DESPAIR OF OUR URBAN EXPERIENCES, WE NEED THIS PLACE TO HELP US SEE THAT PILLAR OF CLOUD BY DAY AND PILLAR OF FIRE BY NIGHT, AND TO REMIND US THAT THERE IS MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS, AND IT IS POSSIBLE FOR FLOWERS TO YET BLOOM IN THE DESERT.

—Rev. Otis Moss Jr.

Rekindling the Spirit of Movement for Our Children

It was with a great sense of urgency for our children, families, communities, and nation that the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) and the Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC) met at the Former Alex Haley Farm in December 1997. Haley is CDF's center for spiritual renewal, leadership development, community building, and intergenerational, interracial, and interdisciplinary communication.

CDF and BCCC, which CDF coordinates, seek to Leave No Child Behind and to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. A key goal is to train a successor generation of young servant-leaders to advocate effectively for children in the new millennium.

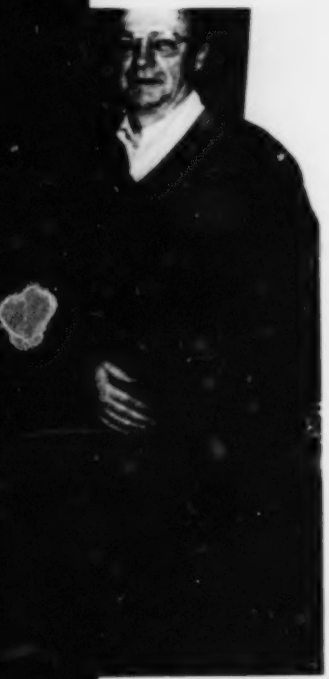
On the 30th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, we seek to rekindle his spirit for our children's sake. It is time for our rich and powerful nation to put the social and economic underpinnings beneath the civil and political rights for which Dr. King and so many others fought and died.

Shame on America and on each of us that a child drops out of school every nine seconds; is reported abused and neglected every 10 seconds; is born into poverty every half minute; is born to a teen mother every minute; is arrested for drug abuse every three minutes; and is killed by gunfire every hour and a half.

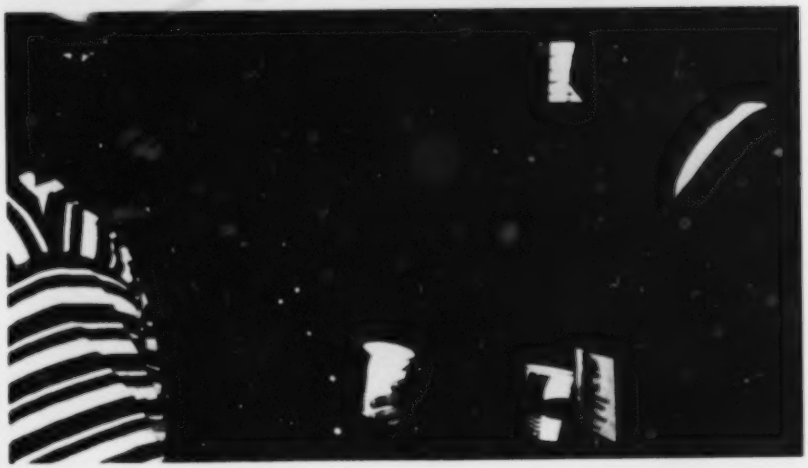
Where is our moral outrage? What is it going to take for us to stand up and say enough! Why do we tolerate 14.5 million poor children in a nation with an over $8 trillion economy? Why are there over 200 million guns in circulation that kill a classroom full of children every two days—over 5,000 children a year? Why are our leaders spending tens of billions

Marian Wright Edelman (center) with (back row left) Dionne Knox, Howard Zinn, John Maguire, Andrew Young, Rev. Will Campbell, John Egerton, (front row left) La'Mont Geddis, Macheo Payne, Angelique Scholtz, Jonah Edelman, Karmen Pinkney, Julie Pierce, Pickett Harrington, and Felicia Nobles

Felicia Nobles (left), Pickett Harrington, La'Mont Geddis, Dionne Knox, Christina Cowens, and Macheo Payne



BCCC Steering Committee Member Angela Glover Blackwell (center) with Sean Irving, Macheo Payne, and Christina Cowens



(From left) Student Leadership Network for Children member Pickett Harrington, Deborah Wright, president and CEO of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation, and Rev. Floyd Flake, share ideas at Haley.

of dollars to imprison children *after* they get into trouble while refusing to adequately invest in early education, after-school, and summer youth development programs to keep them out of trouble? Why is our country spending over $250 billion on national defense in a post-Cold War era with no towering external enemies when millions of children lack health care, are not ready for school, and cannot learn safely in school? Why do we spend more every six days on the military then we spend annually on Head Start?

Our children need to know we will stand and struggle with and for them to build an America where they can survive, thrive, and realize their dreams. Our children also need to learn and draw strength from their history and to be nourished by their spiritual and family roots. They need to hear the stories our grandparents and parents shared with many of us so that they will know who they are and learn about the proud struggle for freedom and justice that is their legacy and responsibility to carry on.

The December meeting sparked a moving intergenerational conversation, not only about the effects of race, poverty, and family and community disintegration on our children, but about how we can connect and expand action for children into a larger unified vision and action plan.

For the young leaders, the meeting was a chance to hear analyses about how and when the civil rights movement began from historians Howard Zinn and John Egerton and civil rights leaders like Andrew Young, Dorothy Cotton, John Maguire, and Revs. Charles Adams, Will Campbell, Prathia Hall, William Howard Jr., and Otis Moss Jr. They also heard from leaders of the children's movement like Angela Glover Blackwell, Geoffrey Canada, Rev. Zina Jacque, juvenile court judges, and other BCCC leaders.

For the elders, it was a chance to share some of the lessons, costs, and hard-won successes of the civil rights era and to nurture a new generation of young activists and servant-leaders who, with nurturing adults, are building the new millennial movement to protect children and to rebuild our families and communities.

The too rare, rich, and honest dialogue turned the simple gathering into an extraordinary and inspiring exchange of ideas, emotions, and concerns. Only a tiny portion of them are

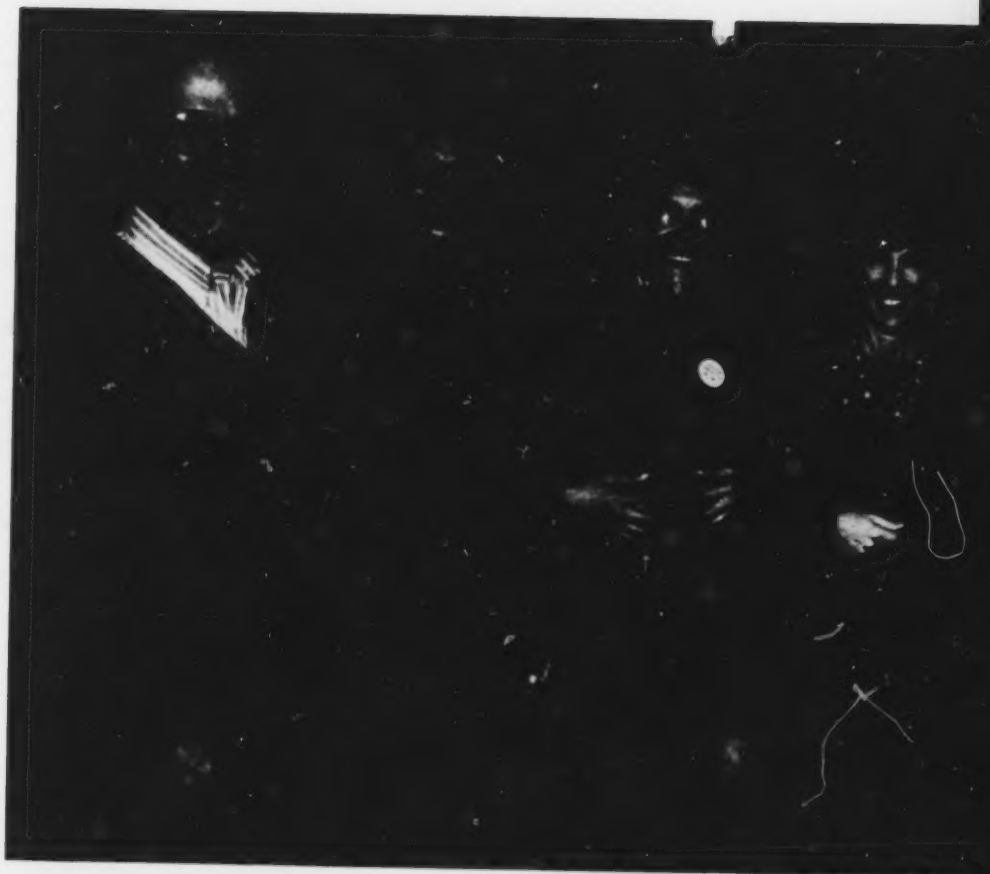
shared in this book. A 1999 book will include the range of issues and strategies expressed in this and four other action forums on Children, Race, and Poverty convened by CDF and BCCC during 1998.

In this book, when you hear the young people speak in their own clear, strong voices, you will know that the flame of truth, justice, and freedom burns as brightly in them as it has in any generation. And when you hear the elders share their sorrows, joy, faith, and determination, I hope you will feel inspired to do your part to give all of our children hope and a sense of empowerment that together we can transform our nation. Young people need all of us to care, to raise our voices, and to use our votes and leadership on their behalf.

In 1998, as CDF celebrates 25 years of advocacy, service, and leadership for children, I am proud that millions of children with disabilities have received a right to public education and that millions of poor children have received health care, child care, a Head Start, permanent adoptive homes, and immunizations. I am also proud that many billions of new dollars have been invested in prevention and early intervention programs for all of our children over the last quarter century. In 1997 alone, a CDF-led Child Health Now! coalition was key to adoption of a Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP). CHIP will provide 5 million additional children—most of whom live in working families—health coverage over the next 10 years. I am not proud, however, that another 6 million children in America lack health coverage. We must change this together.

There is much more to do. Despite America's six-year economic boom, children remain the poorest group in the nation. One in five children lives in poverty. Most of them live in working families. Only a massive movement will transform our national priorities and turn these facts of child neglect into hope and opportunity for all children.

While the Haley meeting examined problems that social reformers have struggled with throughout history, including poverty, racism, failing schools, poor health care, and criminal justice, it also underscored the notion that each of us is called on to take one step, even if we cannot see the whole stairway.



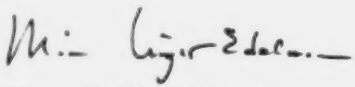
(From left) CDF Board Chair David W. Hornbeck, Vice Chair William Lynch Jr., CDF President Marian Wright Edelman, CDF Vice Chair Maureen Cogan, and CDF Board Member Len Riggio

BCCC's DeShaunda Gooden reads a Bible passage as Marian David, director, Island of Peace, listens.

Macheo Payne and Julie Pierce

I hope you will come to Haley, catch the spirit of movement, and take it back to your family, school, congregation, and community and help spread it all across our land.

Throughout our 25th anniversary year, CDF is saluting America's children and youth. *Rekindling the Spirit* is dedicated to young people everywhere who are carrying on a spirit of activism and giving back to their communities. While others sacrifice our nation's children for political expediency or for personal gain, many youths are beating the odds and distinguishing themselves by acting on their convictions. They have our deepest admiration, support, and eternal love.



Marian Wright Edelman
CDF President and BCCC Co-Convener

1 *Coming Back to Get You*

Rev. William Howard Jr., president of New York Theological Seminary

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Heady Days

Fred Chapel was the name of the sheriff of Americus in Sumter County, Ga., where I'm from. Fred Chapel had a reputation for being a mean sheriff. So we would be at our bravest and at our most daring when we would walk in the streets of Americus singing, "I ain't scared of Fred Chapel because I want my freedom. I want my freedom now." Those of you who used to sing that song know that alternatively you would sing a verse and the refrain, and we would name the person that Black folk feared the most, people like Fred Chapel, George Southwell from the GBI [Georgia Bureau of Investigation], and we would sing it at the top of our voices as if to show how daring and unafraid we could be.

I can remember the day I discovered how real this all was, when I was walking at the front of the line arm in arm with Rev. Charles Sherrod, and Sherrod began to sing, "I ain't scared of Fred Chapel." And right there standing in front of us with this long, foreboding nightstick in hand that looked like a baseball bat was old Fred Chapel himself with the ridges of tobacco spit framing his lips, red-faced by the worst brand of racial hatred, and by our audacious challenge to his authority.

Those were heady days, and in the midst of all of this we were having fun, for I cannot imagine what the movement would have been like without Motown. What would the movement have been like without Curtis Mayfield telling us "we're a winner, we're movin' on up"?

Those were heady days, which miraculously large numbers of us have lived to tell about, especially when you consider what was at stake. What I seem to remember most on this side of 50 was as a teenager how relatively unafraid we were. Some of this had to do with our youth and our naiveté, but that was not the sole reason. The songs we sang, whatever the lyrics, were songs of faith. They were songs of faith in a God who, we deeply believed, was not only on our side, but *by* our side, in the midst of our struggle. And it was that God who later called me to this ministry.

I look here upon some whom I know personally have walked through the valley of the shadow of death, trusting in that God. Prathia [Hall] from south Georgia and Selma; Marian [Wright] in those lonely days in Mississippi; Andy [Young] in places like Thomasville and Birmingham and Albany; Dorothy [Cotton], all over this place—you have been kept whole for just a time as this, to pass on a spark, to pass on an insight, to pass on the demythologized truth of our journey.

A Ragtag Army

The March on Washington made it appear that we were a mighty host. We really were a ragtag army. We were a very small percentage of the groups we represented. We were not *all* students. We were a *few* students. Not *all* churches. A *few* churches.

Everybody who tells you today, "I was there," I doubt that. It would not be healthy for us to let you believe that we acted because we had nothing to lose because things were so bad. It was because of what could be lost that we were so few.

What could be lost was not only our lives. They weren't all shot down, and they weren't all beaten to death. Some lost their health. We lost physical health. We lost mental health. There were so many casualties that some are yet alive but are just shells of themselves. I think those of us who survived have survived because we did not lose our spiritual lives.

Rev. Prathia Hall, (center) with (foreground from left) John Maguire, Angela Glover Blackwell, Marian Wright Edelman, Rev. Samuel Thomas Ross Lee, Regis Lane of Minorities-in-Law-Enforcement, and Roberta Griffin Torian of Jack & Jill of America, Inc.

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Freedom School and Student Leadership Network for Children leader Macheo Payne

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A Movement Is Building

We're all part of a movement with the Freedom Schools, those of us who have been participating in it. Everything you guys have been saying about what happened in the sixties, those of us in Freedom Schools are inundated with that information. It's part of the Ella Baker Child Policy Institute training.

There is a movement now. In terms of comparing it to the sixties, I don't think that's fair. There are so many conditions that are different. Where I'm from on the West Coast in Oakland, the movement, from my parents, from my heritage, was militant, was Black Power, was the Panthers, and that was a dangerous movement.

My parents raised me differently. They told me the battle is spiritual. There's a movement happening, but you can't expect to see the same telltale signs of a movement that you saw in the sixties. It may be more subtle. It may be less dramatic. We can't always look for the dramatics in a movement. This Freedom School movement is very subtle. It's slow, but it's building. It's gaining momentum, and I think it's just as powerful.

I don't feel like there is a problem because the younger people are sitting here, and the older people are sitting over there. I'm sure by the time the weekend is over the seats will move now that we've had this conversation. It's a matter of "comfortability." Not that I don't think you all value my opinion. It's also a sign of respect.

I know in my family when I would go to family gatherings, my mother would tell me stories about our family. I would ask her why different relatives never told me about this stuff. My mother would tell me you have to ask. Then I would go up to them, someone like my grandfather, and he would talk to me for hours about where I came from and what we're about. There's a give and take. You have to meet us halfway. So in a lot of this dialogue, it would be helpful—you won't be offending me—if you talk to me like I'm a 10-year-old when you're talking about policy and statistics and stuff.

A Movement Finds Its Leader

Someone asked me to say something about Ella Baker, and I have to say we didn't get along too well with her. You have to remember we were almost 30. She was almost 50. I was on the staff of the National Council of Churches with Will Campbell and had an opportunity to come back to work with Martin Luther King Jr. and Ella Baker and a friend of hers called my mother and father and said, "Please, don't let Andrew come to work with them. Those guys aren't going to ever get it together," and she was talking about Martin [Dr. King], and Ralph [Abernathy].

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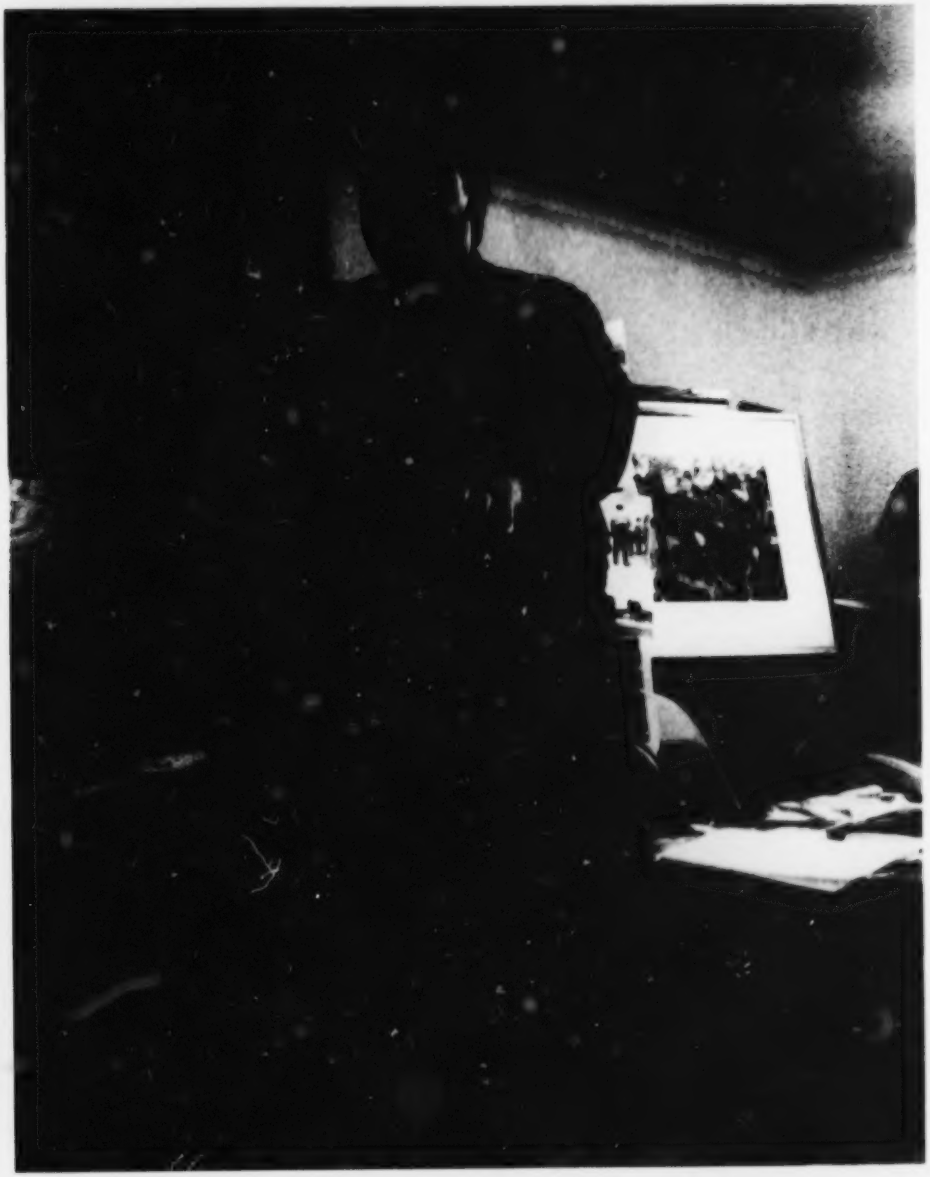
I came anyway. It is understandable though. Martin understood it. At 25 to 30, you are trying to break away from your mother's influence. Ella Baker got along very well with the students who were 17 to 20, but for those of us who were 25 to 30, who were trying to cut the apron strings with our own mothers, the presence of a strong woman in our lives was a terrible threat.

One of the things that I think spoke to the authenticity of Martin Luther King's leadership was he didn't want to be a leader. He always figured if you have got to face the cross, the cross ought to find you.

He was not anxious to assume the leadership of the movement because, for him, he was almost certain that leadership meant death. But he always said if you haven't found something you are ready to die for, you are not fit to live anyway. One of his favorite exercises was preaching your funeral. He was so sure that we were going to die that he would rehearse the funeral that he would preach about you in which he would say all of the embarrassing things that he knew you would never want anybody to know publicly. A funeral oration by Martin Luther King was a roast!



Civil rights leader and former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young

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Youth leaders (from left) Pickett Harrington, Macheo Payne, La'Mont Geddis, Christina Cowens, Dionne Knox, Eric Bell, and Felicia Nobles

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Demystifying the Lies

I decided in my senior year of college that I wanted to work with children. I wanted to demystify some of the lies about Black children. Our community must consistently put a great deal of energy into counteracting the negative stereotypes about our kids because other forces are putting a great deal of energy into perpetuating them. Whether it's drug dealers or the media or people who tell kids they should drop out of school, we have to respond to the negative messages our children see and hear and feel every day. I grew up in Harlem and I went to a small liberal arts college in Maine [Bowdoin]. Even though there were very few Blacks there, I knew I wasn't a freak of nature, that, if I could do it, anybody could. When I first began meeting some of the young people at Rheedlen [Centers for Children and Families in New York City], college was a dream they couldn't see. Now they are applying to college and getting in. We've seen that happen. Many have come back to Rheedlen to become servant-leaders. They are living out the philosophy of "each one teach one."

Rev. Prathia Hall

Make Us Talk to You

My generation owes your generation an apology because we did not tell you. Many of my generation felt that they were doing those things so that you would not have to. So they wanted to spare you the pain of the old story. So without ever understanding what they were doing, they deprived you of your story.

Sometimes they just didn't want to revisit all that personal pain, but in the process we failed to do for you what those who had come before us had done for every generation until then, and that was to pass it on, to pass on the story.

So sometimes we were protecting ourselves. I don't know. I came out of Selma in 1965 clearly in post-traumatic stress. I went into a period of silence. I was a public speaker for the movement, but I didn't want to speak to anybody, and I know that many of my colleagues went through that same kind of experience.

What forced me to open up and to talk was that I had children, and I had to be more responsible for the community's children. But we went through various phases of silence until my son was in high school—having been the flies in the buttermilk in a suburb of a suburb—in a wealthy White school district, and when they went through a season when skinheads popped up in the school district and started writing KKK signs and swastikas and "Die, Nigger, Die," and chased a young 14-year-old student in the dark of night and scared him so badly that he had to run to ring the bell of a stranger, not knowing who was behind the door.

Then the students organized an African American awareness club, which forced the parents to organize the parent support group. When the parents came together, they were in shock, my generation. They said, "What are we here for? What is this? We thought we did this? Why are we having to do this again?" They were not prepared to face the resurgence of racism. So what you do not know is not necessarily your fault because what helped to prepare us for the struggle, for the movement, was the generations who had gone before us felt it their obligation to prepare us, and we dropped the ball. That's just real.

A young man in my logics class at Hampton University said to me, "Reverend, our parents have given us every material thing, but they have not talked to us." So, for God's sake, *make* us talk to you.

Kellye McIntosh (left) with BCCC Steering Committee Member Barbara J. Sabol

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15 *The Alchemy of Activism*

Democracy Is Not a Diagram

Even while we're working day to day, we must all have some understanding that something much, much deeper, much more fundamental has to be done; that we need some radical transformation of our society, and you can't do that without having some great social movement.

It's important to have all these thousands of pockets of energy around the country working on different things, but at a certain point in history those pockets of energy have to come together into a great movement for social change. Only in that way has important progress been made in the history of this country. I mean, it hasn't been made by the President, really, or Congress, or the Supreme Court. It hasn't been made by what was presented to us in junior high school as democracy.

I remember sitting there in a class in junior high school and the teachers would put on the board the structure of American government. You know, here's the executive branch, here's the legislative branch, here's the judicial branch; and here you draw the arrows. Here are the checks and balances.

I remember sitting there awed. How beautiful! How wonderful! This is how the system works. It wasn't until years and years later that I realized you can't put democracy on the blackboard. It's not a diagram, and it's not a set of institutions that can operate on their own, motivated by some powerful moral sense, without the intervention of ordinary people.

When you go back into history and you look at what people had to do to solve the problems they had, again and again they had to create democracy out of their own sacrifice, out of their own willingness to risk jail and death in order to bring about social change. They had to create social movements.

Historian and author Howard Zinn 17

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Freedom School and Student Leadership Network for Children leaders Sean Irving and Christina Cowens with Dr. Margaret Betts (rear), member, Detroit school board and Hartford Memorial Baptist Church

Two Perspectives

As a younger person, as with a lot of younger people I interact with, many of us have absolutely no faith in this system that you're all working in, no faith whatsoever that it's going to work for us, that it's going to give us what we need. Therefore, many of my peers have no motivation to participate in it. This is the same system from Jump Street that was built to justify slavery. This is the same system we're supposed to work within to solve our problems, and young people just don't see that.

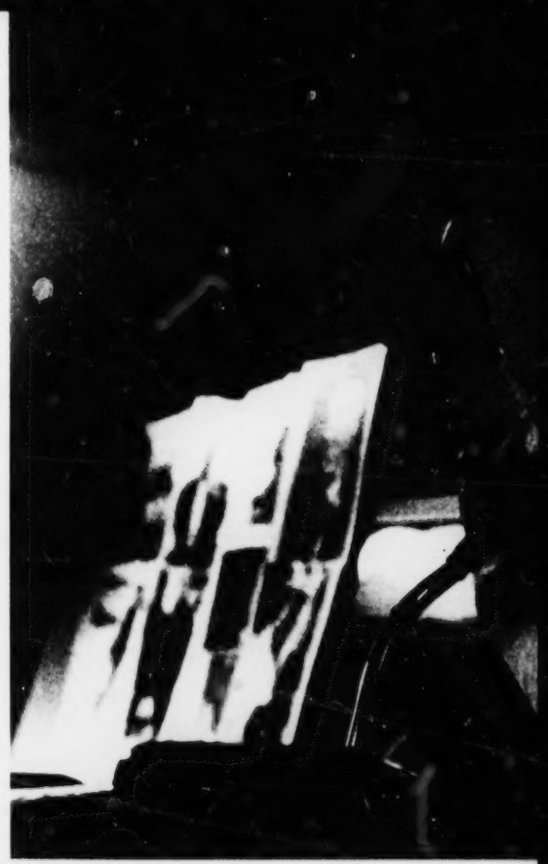
I'm trying to figure out how I'm going to go to the brothers standing on the corner in downtown Oakland smoking blunts and smoking crack and talk to them about things like child care and welfare reform and policy stuff like that. They're not going to even hear me.

Another thing, as far as the way the movement was carried out in the sixties, in terms of nonviolence—young folks are not feeling that. They're not feeling that at all. I'm not trying to downplay what you did. I'm thankful for it, but it's not something a lot of people feel today. So I guess the challenge I'm putting out is how we can bridge the two perspectives between the generations. I don't think either is better than the other, but we just need to learn how we can bring both perspectives together so we can succeed.

What Makes a Leader?

Something is on my mind about leadership. My sense is the leaders emerge from the action. I mean, I don't know if Martin Luther King Jr. would have happened without Rosa Parks. I know some folks would disagree with that. I get concerned about what we do with our leaders anyway. We put them on such a pedestal that they don't come across anymore as human beings, and I think that's dangerous, but when action is happening, leadership emerges. So don't worry that there isn't the charismatic leader up there. He or she will emerge from the action.

Another thing. I hope that in your work you will sing and have a good time. Don't forget to have some joy, to express joy in your work. Use all aspects of your being. We are more than intellect. We are heart and soul and spirit. So have fun, good fun, with it.



Dorothy Cotton, civil rights and citizenship education leader

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BCCC Steering Committee Member Geoffrey Canada, president of Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in New York City

Community Building

The question is what to do and what is our personal responsibility to act? You can't pick up the whole load yourself, but can all of us pick up a strategically smarter, heavier load than we have been carrying right now?

All of us at Rheedlen [Centers for Children and Families in New York City] are trying to figure out how we can make a difference. First, you need data. You have to understand what the problem is, where the problem is and be able to actually talk about it with some competence in real time. I'm not talking about four or five years ago. I'm talking real time. Do you understand what's going on right now? We decided we are going to do something called the Harlem Children's Zone. We are going to take a 24-block area and really try to figure out what it means to rebuild community, not in an abstract sense but in a real nitty-gritty, hands-on sort of way. We want to have an impact on the schools. It is controversial because the schools are public institutions, but I don't think you can do community building without improving the public schools dramatically. In the Harlem Children's Zone there are three public schools. Eighty percent of the children in them are reading below grade level. Eighty percent, and this is not new. This has been going on for decades. We know what's coming. These children aren't going to be able to compete. We have also organized block associations. We are going to open up a parent support center so parents can get help and support. Right now, the only way you get help if you have a problem with your child is if you come in contact with a city agency or someone else who might take your child away. We are going to open up an employment center. We have a huge problem, not only with people not working, but with people who are working being underemployed. They are working as hard as they can, and they simply cannot make ends meet. We actually went out and surveyed folks in the community about why they aren't working. A huge issue was jails. Lots of folks have been to jail, and they can't get back into the labor market.

This is a seven-year project and this is the first year. We have already reached over 3,500 children. We are working with over 600 residents. It is part of our mission to double the number of children we are serving, to serve another 3,000 children. The last thing I want to say is we have young people directly involved in all of this. That's crucial. If no younger group has seen our successes and our failures and learned how to do things better than we are doing them now, at least young people always think they can do things better anyhow. They actually need to see it and be part of it. Sharing that information is absolutely critical to sustaining this work over time, so our progress is not dependent on one or two people. But really spread out in a community, so lots of people have these kinds of talents.

Pickett Harrington

Growing into Leadership

I went through a rites of passage program that prepared young people for adulthood. It involved learning African American history, developing creative thinking skills, and spirituality. After that, I became an intern for the Freedom Schools and, later, a trainer for the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute. Some of the kids I've taught, in another year, they'll be able to be interns. So I've seen them come up through the program. BCCC develops leaders and it does it in a way no other program does by combining a spiritual component and skill-building to give you the resources you need. I know a lot of people, when they think about the problems we have today, they feel like they don't know where to start. They feel disenfranchised. They don't feel like they can make a difference, but the Crusade ties you into the larger picture. You find out there are other people working on the same goals you are. It also connects you to all the people who have come before you, which is a legacy and a strength to draw on.

Freedom School participants (rear left) Kip O'Hara and Pickett Harrington

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27 *Taking Up the Call*

Youth leader

Christina Cowens

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Make It Plain

I definitely feel that there is an urgency within the Black community. But what I want to know from older people is exactly how do you do it. How did you get started? What did you have to do? Who did you call? I want to know right down to the bare essentials. I want to know exactly how you do everything. I want to know down to the last detail. I want a list, not to even emulate it but to take that knowledge, take that model and then modify it, put in my own ideas along with other people's, but I feel that I need to have some kind of set way of doing things.

A Whole New Army

I just want to say to the young people: thank you. Thank you for reminding us to first love you, respect you, share with you, communicate, and nurture you. I say that because four of you approached me today, and I sort of took it for granted until you said something again tonight. Two of you asked me if I was mentoring anybody. One of you asked me for the blueprint. She said, "Tell me how you do it," and I kept saying in my mind, "I shouldn't tell you everything, you've got to give something, too." But she was serious. I didn't hear that then.

Rekindling the spirit is what this is all about, but so often we leave our young people out of everything because we take you for granted. But I applaud you for being here. Even though I'm out here on the road, running for my life, I've got to remember to reach back for one of you. Some of you are saying, "How do I catch you?" I am so glad you did because that told me that I have to slow down. I have to remember that you've got to catch me. If I'm running so fast, doing all these things, that you can't catch me, I'm running in vain because we need to build a whole new army, and you're that army. I'm tired.

Marian McCann-Hickson (right), executive vice president of Mount Bethel Human Services Corporation, Inc., in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., pauses to talk to Angelique Scholtz (left) and Christina Cowens.

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Andrew Young and

Dorothy Cotton

We Didn't Have a Blueprint

On a lot of college campuses where I do workshops and talk, some young folk think us old folk had a blueprint. We didn't know they were going to beat the living daylights out of us when we started. We didn't know that.

We sat up almost all night sometimes strategizing. We would take an action, and then we would see what kind of reaction we got, and then we would do the next action based on the reaction we got. I just want to say, a movement is dynamic. It's evolving. It's changing. Nobody had a blueprint, and don't let anybody tell you that we did.

I'm not sure why action springs up in a lot of different places at the same time. It was like something was abroad in the land. So you may be able to learn some things from our struggle, and I emphasize *struggle*, to advance democracy in this country. We didn't have a blueprint, but we were sick and tired of being sick and tired, and some folk took action and we learned as we went.

Youth leader

Angelique Scholtz

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How Do You Keep from Giving Up?

I wanted to ask about two different things. I'm one of the people who asked Ms. Hickson about bringing somebody up behind you to make sure that, when you get tired, somebody can slip in and make that transition into the leadership, so things don't fall apart. I'm only 25 so I haven't been in a lot of programs, but I've been in a couple of programs where it seems like they're doing great work, but if the leader gets tired, then the work is gone, and the children suffer. So I see this as one of the ways to pull the people from behind to fill a spot when the people who are in there get tired. But how do you do that more? How do you do that on a smaller level? How do we get you to slow down so we can catch up?

Another thing that's a little closer to my heart. . . Sometimes I get a little paralyzed by the issues. How do you see all the evil out there for all the years and not get paralyzed? And not just throw up your hands and say, "Well, let me just put food on the table for my family?" You know, just say, "You're on your own," because I think I heard that from you when you apologized to us about not telling us because maybe it was just a little too painful. So how do you see and hear all the evil that's out there, especially when it comes to our kids, and not just want to lie down and die? Because sometimes that's how I feel, and I'm only 25.

I'll Be with You

Angelique, I don't know how to answer that other than to say I appreciate your tears. There's a piece of scripture in the 43rd chapter of Isaiah. The Lord is saying to His people, whether you go through waters, I'll be with you. When you go through fire, I'll be with you. You won't be burned. There is this power that keeps us. The prophet says no weapon formed against my people will prosper. Now that doesn't mean I might not die. It doesn't mean somebody might not shoot me when I'm walking in the combat zone in Boston, but even as my spirit goes up if I'm killed, there is success and power. Like He told the prophet: I know you by name. All of the hairs on your head I've counted.

Then there's another story. Do you know the story of Esther? Girl was passing in the king's palace, thought she was Persian. Uncle told her to lie about who she was, a woman, a minority, an orphan. Uncle said, "You're so cute, you go in the king's palace; they won't know who you are."

Angelique—Esther—you were born for such a time as this, and you have been ordained to do great things. Fear causes us to realize we are finite, but thank you, Lord, we belong to the infinite.

So don't worry about crying. Just find someone who will give you a hug. Find someone who will hold your hand. Don't worry about being frightened. Know on whom you rely. Don't rush to titles. Don't rush to people who can stand up and sound good. Rush to those folks who will hold your hand and stand by you because in those midnight hours, doesn't matter about the Ph.D. It matters that I'm standing with you. And never forget, the God who created you will never leave you. *Never.*

Rev. Zina Jacque, executive director of Boston's Ten Point Coalition

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Passing on the Spark

Freedom rider and Claremont [Calif.] Graduate University President John Maguire

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Seeds of Change

I use "spirit" in the sense that social historians talk about the spirit of an age. I think we are at an absolute cross moment in America right now. I think there are two spirits abroad in the land. One is a spirit toward cynicism as you look at national government, political practice, and so forth, and it is a spirit down towards negativism. But I also see evidence, particularly since I work on college campuses, of a yearning for social justice, greater equity in society, a more genuinely inclusive democratic society. But I think there are several social impulses, if you want to call them that, that are operating in our society right now. We want to encourage a spirit towards positive social transformation. It's almost like spring flowers trying to come up. We need a new season of surging towards social justice. That's the kind of spirit I'm talking about, and that's the spirit we're trying to rekindle.

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One Battle

I just wanted to take this time to thank Angelique because sometimes I sit in that same despair although I wear it in a different way. I often sit with that same sense of hopelessness. I definitely feel that your words have helped me, being a Black male in a society that seems to devalue me, attack me at times, and lets me victimize myself and others. Thank you for bringing the emotional piece to it because oftentimes as a Black male our emotions are on the basketball court, or ingesting a substance to hide that emotion. I would hope from this discussion we recognize that it is one battle, and we all have one struggle, but we may be speaking different languages. My language may be KRS-1, and somebody else, your language may be Mahalia Jackson or the gospel songs that you so easily can sing and go to for strength and resolve. So I just ask that you be patient with our progress, as we learn and feed from each other in protecting children or protecting whatever cause we pick to struggle in together, because this continuity is something we've been missing.

Youth leader

Leon Caldwell

BCCC Steering Committee Member and Rockefeller Foundation Senior Vice President Angela Glover Blackwell

Our Challenge

There are really three levels upon which we need to think about what it is that we are going to do. One is how do we rekindle the spirit because it is that rekindling of the spirit that kept some of us awake as we tried to think about why this is such a rare conversation, the one we are having. We all want to have it, but why does it so rarely happen?

We talked about the South, about the framework back in the day when we started the movement that we are now trying to recapture. We looked at how we struggle across lines of difference. And about the spiritual core and how we don't need to be afraid of that. We need to figure out a way to let that flow because that, too, is important for those who are able to continue to give as the struggle gets harder, and you have disappointments and you lose people along the way. It is the spiritual core that helps some people go the distance.

We must think about strategies that we can use to be able to help people who are the next generation behind us catch the spirit of advocacy and responsibility for what happens in their schools and in their communities.

There are a number of other things that we had talked about in terms of rekindling the spirit. I think that John Maguire was very right when he talked about building it in local communities. What we do know is that in local communities all across this country, that part of the spirit of working across lines of differences, solving problems, building friendships and networks out of struggle, in every community in America there is a place that you can point to where that is happening. It is a very modern challenge right now to try to think about how you build national movements from local movements.

Mobilizing a New Generation

I know a lot of people have looked at our generation and said, "What are they doing?" At times, I've looked at us and said, "What are we doing?" I think, in terms of where we are now, where we need to start is protecting what you all have done for us in getting to where we are today. Take affirmative action. We can't sit back and reactively address affirmative action repeals because then we will continuously lose battles.

A lot of people in my generation are called apathetic. We talk about this a lot. Well, we are doing things. I just want to speak up. The Freedom School movement is just one small example of what's going on. These kinds of intellectual conversations happen in every dorm. They happen in classrooms. Young people don't know when to shut up, but it's just an energy because once you get all fired up, it's like, "Where is it going?"

That energy that our parents had because they really had nothing to lose, it's not there with us. So we are labeled apathetic. At the same time, we're the new wave, and we're trying to find the right way to go about things.

We know students all over the country are organizing and mobilizing on important issues that affect children, issues that affect students, issues that affect the economy, social issues. We have to stand up and be able to give examples, not only through our lives and the struggles that we've been involved in. We need to have other voices standing up for us as well, saying, "I know what you're involved in."

Youth leader

La'Mont Geddis

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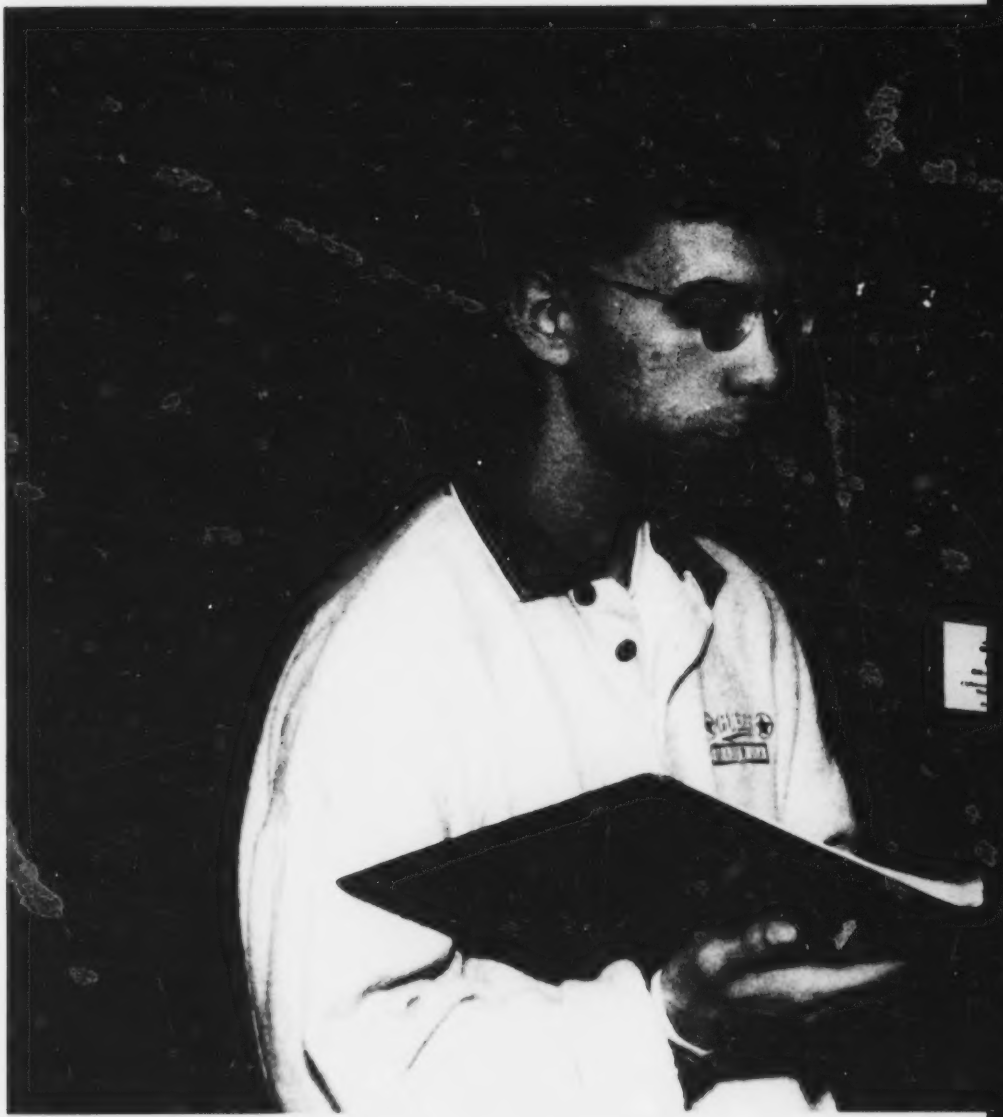
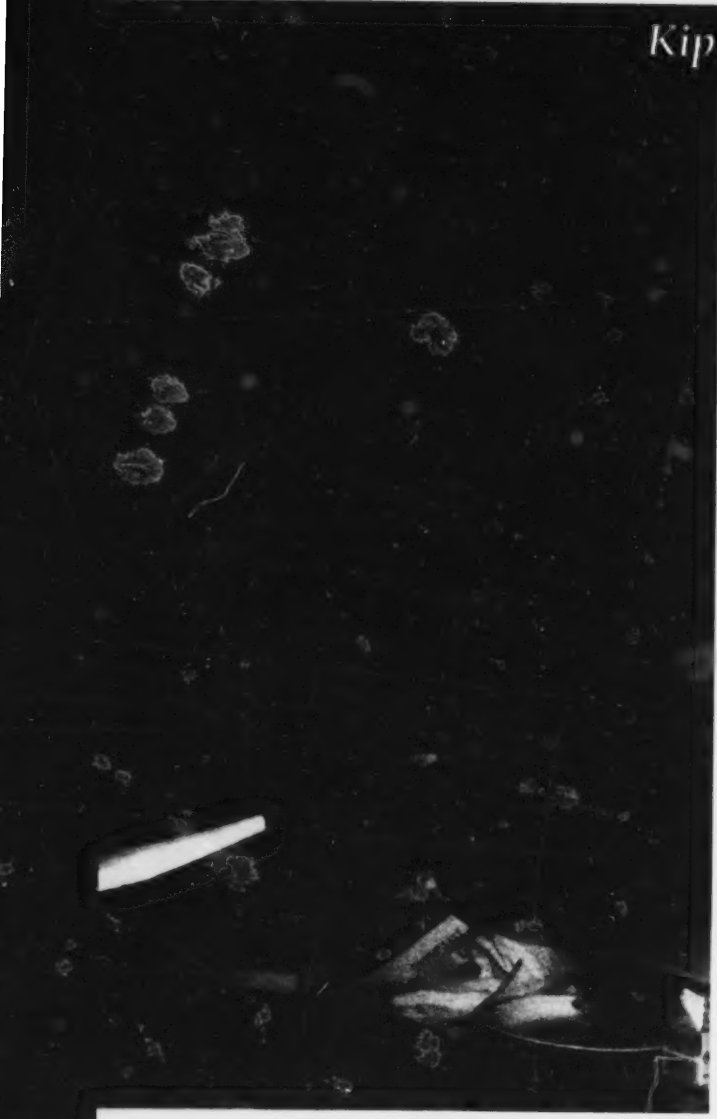


Youth leader Kip O'Hara and Olive Wright Covington, CDF Marlboro County [S.C.]



I've Been Rekindled

When I came here, I had no spirit left. For two months, I had been dealing with a situation involving a young man in Knoxville who was charged with murder. It wore me out, but I came here anyway. I felt like there was no one in Knoxville who was supporting me in what I am doing. Then I came to this meeting and spoke to all of you. . . . I can go back to Knoxville now. I couldn't rekindle anyone's spirit before because I had no spirit. I was down. . . . My spirit has been rekindled, and I can go back and rekindle other people's spirits.

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Meditations for Children's Movement Builders

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Eagles, Geese, and Sparrows

I salute each one of you and wish you well in every endeavor. We have a lot of work to do, and thank you for opening some doors and windows through which we can look and love and make a difference in our time and in our space.

We are challenged by the call to come to this special place, and especially by the invitation to think about vision, goals, challenges, and opportunities for a new millennium.

I want to say a word from two familiar texts, a portion of one [being]: "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." You remember this from the 40th chapter of the book of Isaiah, Verse 31: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."

Someone has said that it could be Isaiah had in mind the three stages of life: youth, advancing adulthood, and older adulthood. In our youth, we fly almost physically, and we certainly can mount up with wings as eagles. But as we grow a little older, we run sometimes toward goals that are noble and worthy and high. As we grow older, sometimes we have to call upon the aid of a cane or a walking stick or a crutch, but with faith we don't get weary.

Go from continent to continent, from nation to nation, and you will discover the eagle representing something special in terms of a nation's dreams, something special in terms of a nation's hope and inspiration, and we can draw lessons from the life of eagles. They build their nests in high places. We can say to our children and to our youth: Build your hopes on things eternal. Do not settle at the mediocre level of comfortable existence, but always go higher. Eagles fly high.

Eagles can teach us a lot of lessons, but there is something about an eagle that's limited. They can fly extremely high, and we *ought* to soar like eagles, and we *ought* to take those words, "I believe I can fly," and make them live everywhere. But the eagle is primarily an isolationist bird.

Have you ever seen a swarm of eagles? They stay to themselves—one or two. They fly high, but they are almost essentially alone. So you need more than just an eagle. You need something else. That something was brought home to me a few years ago when I was browsing in a bookstore and I saw a short book of meditations. It was the title that caught my attention: *Why Geese Fly Farther Than Eagles*. In one of the meditations the writer talks about the fact that geese have memorized the solar system to the extent that they can fly at night, if they desire, with the solar system as a map, and they know east from west and north from south. So they can navigate, day and night. But there is something

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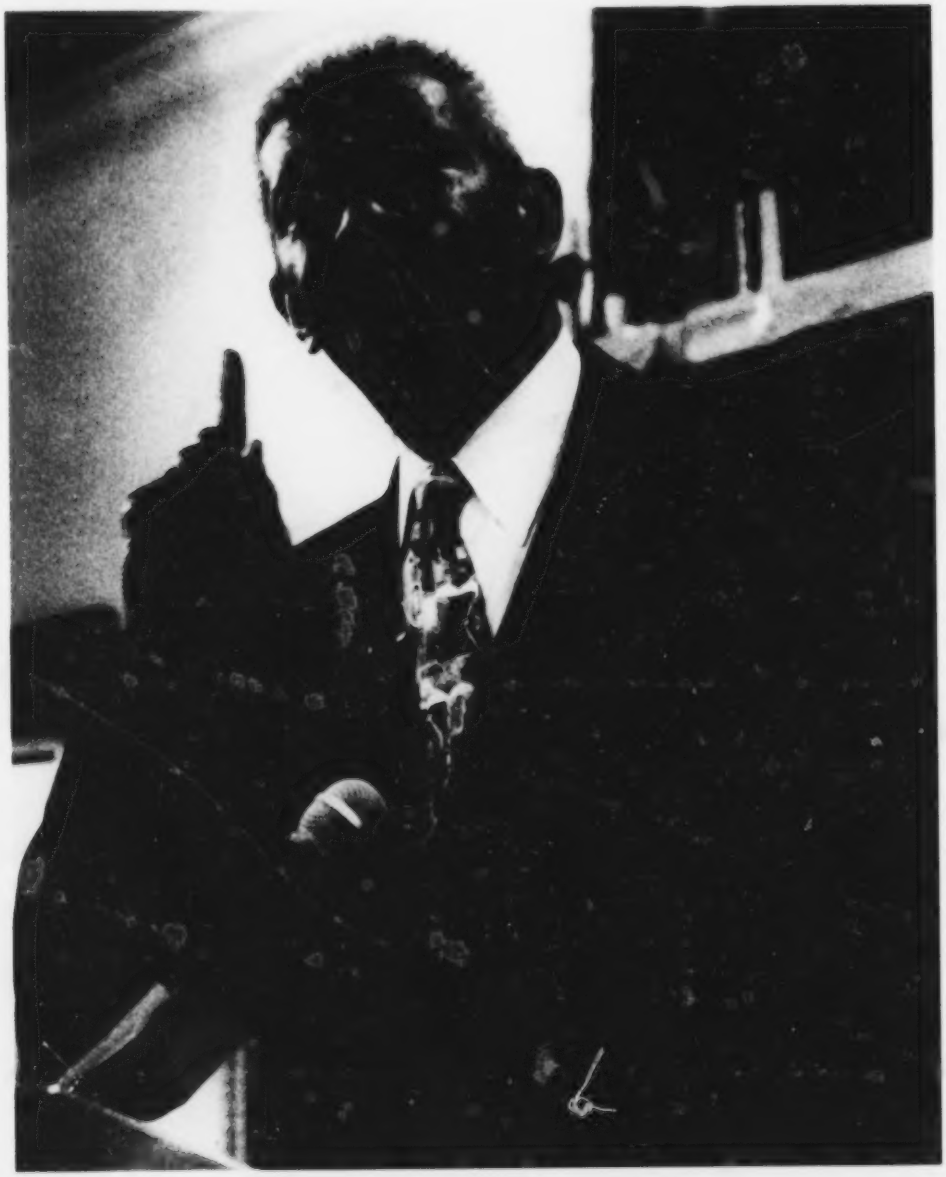

Rev. Otis Moss Jr., pastor of Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland, and chair, Morehouse College Board of Trustees

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Rev. Otis Moss Jr.

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else that's special about geese when they fly. They are organized. They have community. They have a team.

Geese form a *V*, and at the point of the *V* is the head goose, and that head goose splits the air scientifically so that it flows in a special way under the birds' wings as well as over their bodies and they can keep going great distances without exhausting themselves. When the point gets weary, he or she just drops out and pulls to the back, and another moves in his or her place. There are no arguments about who will be written up in the geese newspaper. And when one of the members spies danger, that goose can give a noise, and they all leave the ground and take to the air. No one slips off by himself or herself [thinking]: "I'm glad to be away from you all, it's so safe out here in this gated community where the higher the income, the higher the fence."

But you know something? There is something neither eagles nor geese can do. Eagles can fly *high*. Geese can fly *long*, but neither eagles nor geese can *sing*.

There's another text in Luke, Chapter 12, Verse 6, that I'd like to read: "Five sparrows are sold for just two pennies, but God doesn't forget a one of them." So we cannot forget the sparrow in our vision. For if we do, the team suffers. If we forget the sparrow, the team has no music, and what would the movement be without music? We need the sparrow on our team. And if anybody tries to downgrade the sparrow, just tell them that God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.

Home

I want to talk briefly about home. Where is home? Wherever it is and whatever it is, home is unique, irreplaceable, inimitable, and all-surpassing in its spiritual quality. It is where we came from and our ultimate destiny. It is where we came from originally and where we will go eventually.

Though we may leave home, home never leaves us because home is not just where we are. Home is who we are, deeply, internally, and essentially. Home is a state of being in the heart of God.

Let me tell you an intriguing little story. It is found in the first book of Kings, the 11th chapter, beginning with the 14th verse, which speaks of baby Prince Hadad of Edom, a nation that Israel has subdued in a bloody war.

Little Hadad's father, the king of Edom, was killed in this war with Israel during the military expansionist era of King David and his bloodthirsty captain of the army, Joab. David and Joab wreaked havoc, holocaust, genocide in Edom on the southwest border of Israel. For six months Joab remained in Edom with the armed forces of Israel, the Word says, "until he had killed every male in Edom." At least, that's what he intended.

Please be certain that no attempt to destroy human beings will ever be complete. Somebody will escape to mock the pretensions of power and villainy. Nobody can wipe out the life of any people made in the image of God.

American Indians, Australian aborigines, European Jews, African Americans, 10th-century Edomites have all survived to defy any attempt to wipe us out.

Unbeknownst to David and Joab, some males of Edom survived David's and Joab's brutal attack, and among the survivors was the little prince of Edom named Hadad, heir to the Edomite throne of his father. He was just a baby, a defens[illegible]ss infant, but while strong women died, he escaped because God had appointed him to be a remnant for his people.

A terrible holocaust is being advanced today against the life chances of African American children. Too many Black children are victims of homicide, fratricide, and suicide. Too many Black youths are unemployed. Children: untrained, undeveloped, unprotected, unemployed.

Too many Black youths are in jail and prisons, which constitute remote economic development programs on behalf of people of different hue than the majority of the prisoners. Prisons are being privatized with heavy donations of federal dollars so the wealthy speculators can grow richer and fatter off the inequities and injustices of a criminal justice system that rushes to send Black youths to jail rather than to school.

The cost may be $30,000 a year to keep a Black boy or girl in prison, but the cost is less than $10,000 a year to send that same child to a good primary, middle, or secondary school. Every time a child or adult goes to jail or prison, a gargantuan

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Rev. Charles Adams, pastor, Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, Detroit

Rev. Charles Adams

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economic opportunity is created for private speculators to grow rich off of tragedy and misery.

Sending youths to prison, selling drugs, alcohol and cigarettes to children, targeting tender youth for self-destruction by intensified advertisements of addictive substances aimed at children who cannot handle them are part of our holocaust that threatens the survival of children today.

The good news is that some, like little Prince Hadad, are escaping. The boys and girls that we can reach are escaping. Those who attend after-school academies at churches and rites of passage programs are escaping. Those who go to tutoring programs in the community, athletic programs, are escaping. The girls and boys whose churches encourage them to read a new book every week and to study at least two hours a day—they are escaping. A young 17-year-old brother who introduced me at his high school graduation, who had a 4.0 average and is now studying engineering at Harvard University, has escaped. First Corinthians says that in every temptation God provides a path of escape, and we are here to widen the path. We are here to see that some escape.

Hadad escaped. He was just a baby, a defenseless infant, but he escaped because God had plans for him. Why have we escaped? How did I escape as a motherless child in a mean city? Why do you think you survived? Why do you think God has opened up for you a path of escape?

Could it be that God has plans for you and me to make the world better, the church stronger, and children freer? We must not leave it to the children to decide whether or not they want to escape. We must swoop them up and whisk them away from the destruction of these times. We must not leave it to them. Swoop them up and whisk them away from guns, drugs, gangs, violence, academic indifference, self-destructive behaviors that lead to teenage pregnancy, chemical dependency, and death at an early age.

We have made this land our home away from home. We have helped to make it what it is. When we had the voice to do it, we opened up public accommodations, academic access, and economic opportunity, not just for ourselves, but for all previously restricted minorities and majorities.

Rev. Zina Jacque

Enter Here for Service

I want everybody in the room to imagine something that you did in your young life that you don't want anybody to know about. What was the thing that you did as a child that, had it escaped, had it been recognized, maybe your life would have changed. I don't know about you. I've got that skeleton in my closet. We are looking at young men and women in our communities who find no grace. They come to the church, and the church says you've sinned. They go to their parents, and parents say I don't know. The definition of grace is unmerited favor. It comes straight from God. The one place in our society that is still a dispenser of grace is the church.

So we have to join all of our partners in reclaiming the lives of our young men and women. Let me tell you about the Ten Point Coalition in Boston, what it is and how we formed. In 1992, we had somehow missed taking our message to the streets, and it brought its message to the church in the middle of a funeral. Boys ran into this sacred place and stabbed another child 14 times. It woke us up, and a number of pastors gathered together and said we are at fault. It's on us. What are we going to do?

We formed around what I call "vitamin C." Now you think I'm going to say Christ, and I am, but that's the last one, but there are some other Cs that were important. Communication: We got police and pastors and probation officers talking together. We learned to communicate. Clout: When you put together 60 churches—and that's how many churches belong to the coalition—we can get the attention of the mayor. We can get the attention of the police commissioner. We can attract funders because we are not talking about isolated instances of churches but a community of churches coming together. We've got clout because there's a collaborative process. The last C is Christ. That grace is sufficient and ever present.

So we've got 60 churches doing programs on the ground. We have court advocacy programs. We've got a program at the Boston Police Department called Second Chance where we've trained beat cops, and when they see a child that they know doesn't need to be involved in this system, they say, "Okay, we're going to turn you over to this church. Now, if I see you again, it's over." We have churches that are doing abstinence programs. We've got clusters of churches patrolling neighborhoods at night. We are calling the churches to the task.

I ask you, is it easier to get in the speakeasy on the corner or your church on Friday night? Which door is open? If a child is pregnant and won't tell you who the father is, do you ask her to disclaim and tell you or do you open your arms? Because I know drug dealers who will feed her, who will give

Rev. Zina Jacque, of Boston's Ten Point Coalition, and BCCC leader Geoffrey Canada

her money, and won't ask a question. But will your deacon board do that? Will your trustee board do that? Will *you* do that?

The church has to offer its own *mea culpa* because we closed our children out. We're going to give every church in our coalition a banner that says, "Enter here for service." But you know where we're going to hang it? Over the door that leads to the street.

Dorothy Cotton leads group, including (from left), CDF Board Chair Dr. David W. Hornbeck, Philadelphia superintendent of schools, and H.Q. Thompson (right rear), Haley director of music, and others, in song.

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Seek Higher Ground

Those who have been called to the difficult task of seeing the world at its worst also have the awesome responsibility to sing of its beauty, of its hope, and of its possibility. Our Christian faith teaches us this and gives us examples. With a thorn in his side, Paul kept preaching a liberating love and a risen Savior. With death as an imminent possibility, Esther kept her appointment with the king in an attempt to save her people, and with a cross on His back, thorns in His head, and the weight of the world on His shoulders, Jesus turned to a sinner at that moment and said, "This day you shall be with me in paradise."

Desperate, desolate, and dark situations mean merely that we must keep on singing. It is easy to sing the songs of Zion in Zion where hope is avowed with reality, where love is affirmed at all times, where environments are safe and governments are protective, and religion is relevant, and people are free. It's easy to sing Zion's songs in Zion.

Why introduce me to statistics about ways in which the most vulnerable citizens of our community are being harmed and neglected and abused, and still bid me sing songs of hope, of beauty, and of love? Because it is necessary for hope to live, that

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Rev. Samuel Thomas Ross Lee

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those who wish for it, who pray for it, who work for it, and who love it must be willing and be able to sing those songs while engaging life at its worst. Somehow we must keep alive the lyrical songs of hope and beauty when Zion is far off, for if and when we lose our songs of hope, then hope itself is lost. We must keep singing songs of hope while working to overcome oppressive structures and mountains of evidence to the contrary of possibilities. We must keep singing.

How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? How can we *not*, if we seek higher ground? In the midst of damaging, damning statistics, we seek higher ground. Surrounded by facts that disturb us and issues that depress us, we seek higher ground.

Weeping, we say, endures for the night, but joy comes in the morning; but we must realize that sometimes we've got to see the joy in the nighttime. When the pressures push us back and the work overwhelms us and the days are dark, seek higher ground. When the burden is heavy and the yoke is not light, and the land is strange and hope seems gone, seek higher ground. Sing those songs that grandmama used to sing:

"Here, I'm pressing on the upward way; new heights I'm gaining every day, still praying as I'm onward bound, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground. Our hearts have no desire to stay where doubts arise and fears dismay, though others may dwell where those abound, our hope, our prayer is higher ground."

Postscript

A Black Community Manifesto and Crusade for Children

"Twenty-two African Americans met December 10-15, 1990, to consider problems regarding the Black family and especially the Black child. After due deliberation, we concluded that the Black family and the Black child are in crisis and that we intend to do something about it.

- Each day 1,169 Black children are born out of wedlock.
- Every three minutes a Black infant is born to a teenage mother.
- Each day 201 Black children are born to women who have had late or no prenatal care.
- Every 46 minutes a Black infant dies in the first year of life.
- If the infant is a boy, he has one chance in four that he will drop out of school before high school graduation.
- If the infant is a girl, she has a greater chance than one in four of being unemployed as as teenager.

"These are just a fraction of the indicators that tell us how critical the present status and future outlook of the Black family and child really are. These indicators must be modified in a very positive way if Black children are to have an equal chance to inherit the bountiful natural and human resources that this country has to offer. Our desires and hopes for our children are reasonable to the point of modesty, but we wish no less and no more for them than we wish for every child in every land.

"We want them to grow up with healthy bodies and healthy minds, in a drug-free society, with ample tools for engaging in critical thinking and making sound judgments.

"We want them to have every opportunity to achieve success in school and to understand fully the world of work, what is involved in acquiring marketable skills, and how important it is to make a significant contribution to that world. This involves knowing how the community, state, and workday world operate and what their place is in it.

First Black Community Crusade for Children meeting participants at Rockefeller Foundation Conference Center in Bellagio, December 1990.
Front row: (left to right) Dr. James Comer, Barbara J. Sabol, Dr. John Hope Franklin, Marian Wright Edelman, Dr. Dorothy Height, Angela Glover Blackwell, Dr. Carolyn Reid-Green
Middle row: Dr. John Turner, Byllye Y. Avery, Geraldine Carter, Barbara Bell Coleman, Rev. James A. Forbes Jr., Lisa Sullivan, William Lynch Jr., Roger Wilkins, Amy Wilkins, Dr. Cornel West
Back row: Kent Amos, Dr. Reed V. Tuckson, Harvey Gantt, Robert Peterkin, and Terry Williams

"We want our children to learn that the greatest success lies not so much in amassing a fortune as in having a concern for others and in recovering and preserving the tradition for selfless service to family and community.

"We want them to appreciate fully the artistic, moral, and spiritual values that will bring to them much of their heritage of the past and make it possible to pass them on to their successors.

"We want them to have an understanding and appreciation for family, for their own rich heritage derived from their African forebears as well as their American experience, the kind of understanding that will simultaneously provide them with roots and wings.

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BCCC meeting at Haley Farm

"In the nation's recent past, its families and its schools have experienced deep crises. Family instability has increased markedly, while many schools have deteriorated dramatically, both in their role as educational institutions and as transmitters of our culture and civilization. That nation's Black families have been faced with a deeper crisis in the lack of educational opportunities available to them, exacerbated by the fact that their plight is as old as the nation itself. Slave children were regularly separated from their parents through sale; and the family stability was purchased by desperate measures such as running away or resisting sale. Meanwhile, until emancipation in 1863, education was systematically withheld from them, and in many states it was unlawful to teach them to read and write.

"This legacy of family degradation and educational deficiency, reinforced by disenfranchisement, job discrimination, and finely spun theories of scientific racism became a normal part of the American landscape far down into the twentieth century. The grimness of the picture was relieved only by self-help on the one hand and philanthropic assistance on the other. Neither was adequate to move Blacks to a position where they even approached equality of opportunity in education, in the work place, or in the administration of justice.

"In recent years the crisis had deepened to the point where the very survival of the Black family and its progeny is at stake. The mere effort to survive is so exhausting, as well as demeaning in an affluent society, that constructive contributions to the well-being of the nation remain essentially minimal. The resultant waste of valuable human resources is reminiscent of the waste of natural resources, too long a familiar characteristic of our country. We cannot stand by idly and observe this waste, whether the consequences of profligacy, of lack of respect for human dignity, or of deliberate design.

"Consequently, we pledge ourselves to do everything humanly possible to strengthen the Black family, save Black children through succor as well as love, and to improve and modernize our schools in order to enhance significantly their chances for educational and life success. In this gigantic task we shall utilize to the fullest the resources of parents, children, and the general public.

"There are, of course, a variety of ways to meet these and other worthy goals, and we have had the exciting opportunity to hear some of them described and discussed.

"We have learned about rigorous assistance programs that provide out-of-school opportunities to improve language skills and interpersonal relationships, to learn the critical nature of modern entrepreneurship and technology, and to involve parents and other adults in the learning process.

"We have learned that to a remarkable degree replicable models are being developed in which family ties are strengthened, programs for medical services and child care are expanded, and indigenous staff have been trained to perform effectively at a level approaching professionalism.

"We have learned how in some communities Black people have organized a vast array of self-help groups, extending across many states, through which they impart techniques and approaches that, at little or no cost, have trained a large cadre of leaders able to work with children, organize church groups, and create new organizations dedicated to the improvement of the Black family and Black children.

"We have learned to appreciate the enormous success that professionally trained staffs can achieve when children, parents, and school officials are brought together with clearly articulated goals for improving our children's learning experience.

"We have learned the importance of school reform itself sometimes mild, sometimes drastic but at all times with the clear objective of providing the kind of healthy environment to accommodate the needs of the children.

"We are convinced by these and other experiences that our schools and our families can do much to improve the chances of success for our children. Some have been tested over time and have been found to be successful. Others bear the mark of recent innovations but also bear the mark of mature and responsible thinking that augurs well for their success.

"We have reminded ourselves that government at every level has had an active role not only in programs of racial degradation and discrimination, but also in enabling the economic sector to exploit the land and its resources and thus to prevent anything resembling an equitable distribution of the natural gifts of this country. It is not possible, even with the self-help of persons and organizations, for the government to default on its responsibility to provide a healthy economic order that will not permit a small minority to enjoy the rich resources of the country, while the majority made up of Blacks and many other Americans has no resources commensurate with its size. Government had and must continue to have an important role in solving the deep economic problems that we face.

"We have not completely explored or fully utilized our own talents, or the resources of the many organizations with which we are affiliated. We shall, however, pursue this task relentlessly, knowing full well that some much-needed talents and resources are readily at hand.

"We claim no monopoly of positive and rewarding thoughtfulness about plans and programs for the future of Black families and Black children. We only claim a sincere and deep appreciation of the fact that the crisis is very real and demands the immediate attention of all sincerely interested persons and organizations.

"The crisis of Black families and Black children requires all responsible civic, religious, professional, community, and national groups to join in a nationwide effort to save the Black family, to save the Black child, and to save for our country a rich resource that has already done so much to make the country what it is today and that can do so much to serve it in the future."

Appendix

List of Participants

Keisha S. Abney
The Group for Cultural Documentation, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

Dr. Charles and Mrs. Agnes Adams
Hartford Memorial Baptist Church
Detroit, Mich.

Maria Alvarez
1199 National Health and Human Service Employees Union
New York, N.Y.

James Bell, Esq.
Youth Law Center
San Francisco, Calif.

Dr. Margaret Betts
Chair, Hartford Youth Council
Member, Detroit School Board
Detroit, Mich.

Angela Glover Blackwell
Senior Vice President, Rockefeller Foundation
BCCC steering committee member
New York, N.Y.

Dr. Joyce Brown-McCall
President, Fashion Institute of America
New York, N.Y.

Rev. Will Campbell
Civil rights activist and author
Mt. Juliet, Tenn.

Geoffrey Canada
President/CEO, Rheedlen Centers for Children & Families
BCCC steering committee member
New York, N.Y.

Marshall Cogan
Chairman, Trace International Holdings, Inc.
New York, N.Y.

Maureen Cogan
Chair, *Art & Auction* Magazine
Vice Chair, CDF board
New York, N.Y.

Dorothy Cotton
Civil rights and citizenship education leader
Ithaca, N.Y.

Jonah Edelman
Executive Director, Stand For Children
Washington, D.C.

Professor Peter Edelman
Georgetown University Law Center
Washington, D.C.

John Egerton
Historian
Nashville, Tenn.

Rev. Floyd Flake
Senior Pastor, Allen A.M.E. Church
Former U.S. representative
Jamaica, N.Y.

Roland L. Freeman
President/Photographer, The Group for Cultural Documentation, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

Reva Gibson
Trustee, Hartford Memorial Baptist Church
Detroit, Mich.

Valerie Grey
Principal Policy Research Analyst, Office of the New York State Comptroller
Albany, N.Y.

Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall
Pastor, Mt. Sharon Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa.
Dean of African American Studies, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio

Dr. David W. Hornbeck
Philadelphia Superintendent of Schools
Chair, CDF board
Philadelphia, Pa.

Rev. William Howard Jr.
President, New York Theological Seminary
New York, N.Y.

Rev. Zina Jacque
Executive Director, Boston Ten Point Coalition
Boston, Mass.

Regis Lane
Executive Director, Minorities-in-Law-Enforcement
Sacramento, Calif.

Rev. Samuel Thomas Ross Lee
Pastor, Gill Creek Baptist Church
Columbia, S.C.

Rasuli Lewis
Director, Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families
New York, N.Y.

William Lynch Jr.
Vice President, McAndrews & Forbes Holdings, Inc.
Vice Chair, CDF board, BCCC steering committee member
New York, N.Y.

Dr. John Maguire
President, Claremont Graduate University
Claremont, Calif.

Marian McCann-Hickson
Executive Vice President, Mount Bethel Human Services Corporation, Inc.
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Steven Minter
Executive Director, Cleveland Foundation
BCCC working committee member
Cleveland, Ohio

Judge Veronica Morgan-Price
Harris County District Court Juvenile/Family Division
Co-Chair, BCCC Juvenile and Family Court Judges' Leadership Council
Houston, Texas

Rev. Otis Moss Jr.
Pastor, Olivet Institutional Baptist Church
Chair, Morehouse College Board of Trustees
Cleveland, Ohio

Len Riggio
Chairman/CEO, Barnes & Noble, Inc.
CDF board member
New York, N.Y.

Barbara J. Sabol
Program Director, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, BCCC steering committee member
Battle Creek, Mich.

Dr. Donald Stewart
President, The College Board, BCCC steering committee member, chair, BCCC education committee
New York, N.Y.

H. Q. Thompson
JMH Productions, Haley Farm music director
Medford, Mass.

Roberta Griffin Torian, Esq.
National Legislative Chair
Jack & Jill of America, Inc.
Berwyn, Pa.

Deborah C. Wright, Esq.
President/CEO, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation
New York, N.Y.

Andrew Young
President, GoodWorks International, Inc.
Former civil rights leader, member of Congress, mayor of Atlanta, and U.N. Ambassador
Atlanta, Ga.

Dr. Howard Zinn
Historian and author
Auburndale, Mass.

Student Leadership Network for Children

Eric Bell
Program Coordinator, Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families
New York, N.Y.

Leon Caldwell
Executive Officer, National Black Graduate Student Organization
Irvine, Calif.

Christina Cowens
Student, Spelman College
Atlanta, Ga.

La'Mont Geddis
Site Coordinator, Sojourners Neighborhood Center Freedom School
Washington, D.C.

Eugene Green
Student, Central Missouri University
Kansas City, Mo.

Pickett Harrington
Program Associate, CDF-Marlboro County Freedom School
Bennettsville, S.C.

Sean Irving
Student, Laney College
Oakland, Calif.

Dionne Knox
Project Director, Audrey L. Smith Development Center, Inc. Freedom School
San Francisco, Calif.

Felicia Nobles
Teacher
Starke, Fla.

Kip O'Hara
Student Activities Coordinator, Knoxville College
Knoxville, Tenn.

Macheo Payne
Student, University of California at Berkeley
Oakland, Calif.

Julie Pierce
Student, Yale University
New Haven, Conn.

Angelique Scholtz
Urban Strategies Council
Oakland, Calif.

CDF/BCCC Staff

Helen Blank
Director of Child Care, CDF
Washington, D.C.

Thomas Bowen
BCCC Senior Field Organizer
Washington, D.C.

Lynn Bowersox-Megginson
Director of Communications, CDF
Washington, D.C.

Vicki Pendleton Brandon
Director, Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute
Washington, D.C.

Debra Collins
BCCC Administrative Assistant
Jackson, Miss.

Olive Wright Covington
Director, CDF-Marlboro County
Bennettsville, S.C.

Marian David
BCCC Senior Program Associate
Director, Islands of Peace
Washington, D.C.

Barbara Kelley Duncan
BCCC National Director
Washington, D.C.

Marian Wright Edelman, Esq.
President and Founder, CDF
BCCC steering committee member
Washington, D.C.

Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald
BCCC Southern Regional Director
Jackson, Miss.

DeShaunda Gooden
BCCC Administrative Assistant
Washington, D.C.

Carlene Hardie
BCCC Senior Administrative Assistant
Washington, D.C.

Julienne Johnson
Director, Freedom Schools
Washington, D.C.

James Koppel
Director, CDF-Minnesota
St. Paul, Minn.

Donna Lawrence
Director, CDF-New York
New York, N.Y.

Susanne Martinez
Director of Programs and Policy, CDF
Washington, D.C.

Lisa Butler McDougal
Director of Media Relations, CDF
Washington, D.C.

Kellye McIntosh
Manager, Student Leadership Network for Children
Washington, D.C.

Desda Moss
Press Secretary, BCCC
Washington, D.C.

Karmen Pinkney
BCCC Program Assistant
Washington, D.C.

Mark Real
Director, CDF-Ohio
Columbus, Ohio

Eileen Cooper Reed
Director, CDF-Greater Cincinnati Project
Cincinnati, Ohio

Kim Wade, Esq.
Assistant General Counsel, CDF
Washington, D.C.

South Carolina Educational Television Staff

Jean Chase
Executive Producer, Early Childhood National Programming
Columbia, S.C.

Bill Easterling
Audio Technician
Columbia, S.C.

Paul Keyserling
Videographer
Columbia, S.C.

Herman Rich
Producer/Director
Columbia, S.C.

CDF/BCCC State and Local Presence

Contrary to popular perception, for over 10 of our 25 years of child advocacy, a majority of the Children's Defense Fund's work has been devoted to providing information and assistance to state and local policy makers, child advocates, and community leaders. We seek to ensure effective implementation of national laws designed to help children; to share policy options and practices among states; to encourage collaborative community and individual action models; to mount media campaigns to prevent teen pregnancy and violence and to encourage greater investment in children; and to develop a critical mass of leaders for children of every race, age, discipline, and faith.

We have done this in a variety of ways: through state offices in Ohio and Minnesota; local offices in New York City, Cincinnati, and Bennettsville, S.C.; a Southern regional office in Jackson, Miss.; and collaborative relationships with effective local organizations like the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in New York City; The Charles Drew Child Development Center in Los Angeles, and the Urban Strategies Council in Oakland, Calif. Through the Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC) and its youth development arm, the Student Leadership Network for Children (SLNC), we have deepened our understanding and outreach to leaders and organizations serving minority children while maintaining **our overall mission to ensure than *no* child of *any* race, income, or state is left behind.**

We believe that parental, citizen, and community action must go hand-in-hand with strong private sector and governmental action at all levels to enable all children to reach adulthood ready to contribute to society.

1. **Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC)** is coordinated by CDF in collaboration with effective regional and local organizations, and a committee of distinguished African Americans. BCCC seeks to communicate the crisis facing Black children and to connect and galvanize Black leadership to achieve specific policy and community goals for children. A key BCCC mission is to train a successor generation of young Black servant-leaders for children by the year 2000. Over 1,500 college-age youth have received training through Freedom Schools and other opportunities provided by the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute, the Student Leadership Network for Children, and the Haley Farm leadership development program.

2. **Freedom Schools** are summer academic, nutritional, and cultural enrichment programs for children sponsored by local community institutions, usually churches or schools. These summer and increasingly year-round after-school programs are staffed by college-age leader-mentors. Freedom Schools teach children reading, critical thinking, conflict resolution skills, and chess. Parents partici-

pate in weekly seminars. In 1998, Freedom Schools is serving approximately 2,500 children. Curriculum guides and training videos are available to help communities provide better supplemental education programs for children.

3. **Leadership and Spiritual Development and Community Building.** In 1994, CDF bought the former Alex Haley Farm outside Knoxville, Tenn., as a center for spiritual renewal, character and leadership development, intergenerational mentoring, and interracial, interfaith, and interdisciplinary communication. Over 3,000 leaders of all races and ages have attended Haley training and networking seminars, which include an annual week-long Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry. More than 250 college students who teach in Freedom Schools are trained at Haley each year.

4. **Beat The Odds** celebrates the vast majority of youths who stay in school, do not get pregnant, and succeed despite great odds. Working collaboratively with local schools, corporations, and community sponsors, we also recognize those who help them succeed. Begun in Los Angeles in 1990 by Black entertainment executives, Beat The Odds is now an annual event in over 15 cities. A CDF manual helps interested communities conduct inspiring Beat The Odds events.

5. **The Child Watch Visitation Program** began in 1981—in collaboration with the Association of Junior Leagues, the National Council of Negro Women, and the National Council of La Raza—to document the local child impact of federal budget cuts. Its second phase assessed the teen pregnancy problem locally and how communities could work together to prevent it. The third and current phase conducts site visits for business, media, religious, community, and political leaders to: 1) personalize child suffering; 2) to tie individual child, family, and program needs to local, state, and national budget and policy choices; and 3) to illustrate the cost of child neglect and suffering and positive individual, community, and policy solutions. Since January 1990, more than 150 Child Watch coalitions in 30 states have exposed thousands of community leaders to child needs and solutions.

6. **Annual Children's Sabbath Observances** occur every third weekend in October in every state. Endorsed by more than 175 denominations and religious organizations, it engages tens of thousands of religious congregations in prayer, service, and advocacy for children. Children's Sabbath now reaches more than 50,000 religious leaders and congregations with millions of members. CDF's Religious Affairs Division provides Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Multi-Faith resources to encourage ongoing faith-based action for children.

7. **Community Child Immunization and Health Insurance Campaigns.** Pre-school immunization rates in many cities have lagged behind those of most developed countries in recent years. CDF worked hard to help enact the national Vaccines for Children program to make vaccines affordable to all children. We simultaneously developed local outreach models to increase child

vaccination rates like the public–private child vaccination partnership with Chase Manhattan Bank, New York City's Health Department, and the Robin Hood Foundation. Through television, radio, and print PSAs in several languages, home visits to first-time mothers by trained community residents, multilingual telephone response lines provided by NYNEX, a better tracking system and access to providers; and a simplified one-page Medicaid eligibility form to connect eligible families to ongoing primary care, New York City child vaccination rates have increased from 52 percent to 81 percent (according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). We plan to encourage similar collaborative outreach campaigns in additional cities to ensure effective implementation of the new $48 billion Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) over 10 years and Medicaid enrollment for all eligible children.

8. **CDF's Annual Conference** connects between 2,500–3,000 child advocates, religious, community, and youth leaders, child-serving professionals, parents, and citizens. It provides inspiration, networking, skills building, effective model and strategy exchange, and professional and leadership development. It is held outside Washington, D.C., three out of every four years to engage new communities in our crusade to Leave No Child Behind.

9. **Advocacy Training for State and Community Child Care Leaders** aims to increase the number of families receiving quality child care assistance; to improve the quality of care; to encourage collaboration among Head Start, preschools, and child care providers to leverage scarce dollars to serve more children and families better; and to provide information and technical assistance to state and local community leaders, advocates, and policy makers by sharing the best early childhood education programs and outcomes.

10. **Stand For Children Day** began June 1, 1996, with the endorsement of more than 3,727 national, state, and local organizations. Over 250,000 Americans came together at the Lincoln Memorial in the largest and most uplifting demonstration of commitment to children in the nation's history. Thousands of others stood in 133 local rallies. Organized in just 4½ months, Stand has provoked a variety of grassroots activities. On the second Stand For Children Day, June 1, 1997, over 700 local events stood for healthy children in all 50 states. In 1998, supporters in all 50 states mounted over 1,200 events for quality child care. **Stand For Children** is a separate 501c(3), which provides local grassroots community organizing and skills training to encourage local citizen and community initiatives for children. An 800 number (1-800-663-4032), Web site (www.stand.org), and a *Stand Update* newsletter highlight how individuals, groups, and communities across the nation are standing for children. Stand's national number is (202) 234-0095.

CDF/BCCC Resources

National Headquarters
Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
Telephone 202-628-8787
Fax 202-662-3580
cdfinfo@childrensdefense.org
www.childrensdefense.org

The Black Community Crusade for Children
National Office
Barbara Kelley Duncan
National Director
25 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-628-8787
www.childrensdefense.org/bccc.html

Eastern Region
Rheedlen Centers for Children & Families
Geoffrey Canada
2770 Broadway
New York, NY 10025
212-866-0700

Southern Region
BCCC Southern Regional Office
Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald
207 W. Amite Street
P.O. Box 13
Jackson, MS 39201
601-355-1213

Midwest Region
Greater Cincinnati Project
Eileen Cooper Reed
258 Erkenbrecher Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45229
513-751-2332

Western Region
Urban Strategies Council
672 13th Street
Oakland, CA 94612
510-893-2404

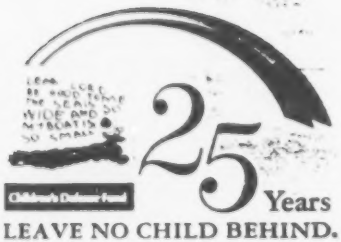
Drew Child Development Corp.
1770 E. 118th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90059
213-249-2950

Freedom School Curriculum Laboratory
Marlboro County
Olive Wright Covington, director
117 Cheraw Street
Bennettsville, SC 29512
803-479-5310

Freedom Schools
Julienne Johnson, director
202-662-3546

Juvenile and Family Court Judges' Leadership Council
Jesselyn McCurdy, program coordinator
202-662-3577

Black Church Initiative
Thomas Bowen,
senior field organizer
202-662-3796



Children's Defense Fund
25 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-628-8787
www.childrensdefense.org

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